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Harlan R. Patton
323 Watson Road
Travelers Rest, SC 29690
October 4, 2005



Mr. Vernon A. Williams, Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K. St., NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20423-0001

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Office of Proceedings

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Public Record

RE: STB Docket No. AB-490-1-X
Greenville County Economic Development Corporation Petition for Exemption for Partial
Discontinuance and Partial Abandonment in Greenville County, SC

Gentlemen:

I am writing to express my support for Greenville County's plan to convert the tracks of the former Greenville and Northern railway into a multi-use trail for recreational and other uses, and to express my opposition to another plan for that right-of-way recently submitted by Western Carolina Railway Service.

When I first moved to Travelers Rest some 20 years ago, the rail line was already in extreme disrepair and used very intermittently. When it was briefly revived some ten years ago to serve a single freight destination north of the city, I was astonished for several reasons: a brakeman had to be sent on foot ahead of the locomotive to ask people to move cars from the parking lots through which the rails meander; the track was in such poor repair that normal walking speed easily surpassed that of the train; and much of the line north of Travelers Rest is forgotten, with only the oldest inhabitants remembering train traffic as far as Cleveland. That line had long been unprofitable when it was abandoned by RailTex in 1998, and even fewer potential freight customers now exist in the northern part of Greenville County served by the line than when that last operator decided to cut its losses and abandon the service.

While I know little of Western Carolina Rail Services, I have attempted to learn what I could from their public on-line sites and other mentions of them on the internet. I see little evidence in this very young corporation of the sort of massive capital that would be required to repair and revive a moribund local railway service with no customer base and a decomposing infrastructure, nor do I see evidence of any current or past ownership of troubled railways which might provide the leadership, planning, experience, and know-how required for such a monumental, thankless, and pointless task.

Greenville County's foresight in purchasing the right of way is a fine example of careful long-term planning: the trail will link sections of the county together, could provide some light rail or tram service at a future date, and will be integrated into the County's Greenways program. The proposal has been debated for long years, community meetings have been held throughout the area to discuss it, and public support has been enthusiastic and well-nigh universal. It would be a serious error to decline support for Greenville County's well-thought-out project, designed to serve the community both now and for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Harlan R. Patton

NB: Certificate of service on reverse

“CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE”

I hereby certify that on this 4th day of October 2005, a copy of the foregoing document was served by First Class U.S. Mail to:

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